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**NAVAL FORCES IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION**

**BY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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During the Cold War, U.S. national security policy had a clear unifying principle of containing Soviet expansion while deterring nuclear attacks against the U.S. or its allies. This principle was expounded in George Keenan's long telegram and Paul Nitze's NSC-68. However, with the end of the Cold War, the world is substantially more complicated and a single unifying principle to provide clear guidance in specific cases is absent. This paper examines the impact of this changing global arena on maritime forces in the Asia-Pacific region. This analysis explores the requirement for the U.S. to cultivate additional maritime relationships in the Asian theater.

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## PREFACE

I owe a special debt of gratitude to my wife and children, who allowed me to miss a year of their lives as I tried to expand my educational horizons; to Lieutenant Colonels Lindy Buckman and Gil Griffin who are true friends and helped me get my tired body in shape; to Ms Dot Overcash whose keen attention to detail made the writing of this SRP easy; and to Colonel Frank "The Franchise" Hancock who could have quietly transitioned into retirement, but rather remained an involved leader, mentor, confidante and friend. Thanks to all of you for your contributions.

## NAVAL FORCES IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

If we know what we want, if we have patience and determination, if above all we have understanding, we can ensure that the Pacific region remains a stable and peaceful environment. But if we are not intelligent, or if we cannot cultivate understanding throughout the Asia-Pacific region, then the traffic across the Pacific Ocean will not be peaceful, but rather armed planes, battleships, and death. While our heart is in Europe, no region of the world is more vital to the future of our nation than Asia.<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

For the Cold War generation, U.S. foreign policy toward the Asia-Pacific region was simple, straightforward, and secure. In the minds of America's foreign policy and defense elites, the only point of reference that mattered was the Soviet Union; everything else flowed from there. That proved true whether Washington was taking sides in the long-standing dispute between India and Pakistan, warming to China, or reacting to Japan's growing trade imbalance. It was also true whether the U.S. was dealing with any of the three sub-regions: Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, or South Asia.

However, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, U.S. foreign relations got decidedly messier. No more did the U.S.-Soviet rivalry subsume every other external relationship. No more could Washington ignore growing grassroots demands for foreign policies based on human rights, democratization, or the environment. With the demise of the "evil empire," the old cold warriors retreated into their bunkers and most everyone else did not know where to start. Nowhere was this confusion more evident than in the domain of Asia relations. In the spring of 1990 some of the most eminent scholars in the field met to hash out U.S.-Asian relations in the post-cold war era and after two days they could not even agree on whether the Cold War had ended in Asia. This point was recently driven home by George J. Tenet the Director Central Intelligence Agency in his annual open session threat assessment to Congress when he stated, "What strikes me most forcefully is the accelerating pace of change in so many arenas that affect our nation's interests. Never have we had to deal with such a high quotient of uncertainty."<sup>2</sup>

The intent of this paper is to examine the future security environment in the Asia-Pacific region and the probable impact upon maritime forces supporting U.S. national security objectives. This examination is forward-focused with little regard paid to the path taken to get to the status quo and with no real constraints on how we will proceed to the future. This study will

contain a dearth of information regarding our historical ties to the Asia-Pacific region and those corresponding issues, while not entirely ignored, shall receive only cursory attention.

What it does intend to do is awareness of the magnitude and variety of potential outcomes in this critical region, and the immense degree of flexibility U.S. maritime forces must demonstrate to adequately prepare for and execute operations there.

## THE LANDSCAPE

Often in the examination of the path that should be taken to prepare ourselves for the future we look to from whence we have come and there is an obvious tendency to base what we think on what we know. Although a prudent and rational approach, throughout time, we have done a poor job of predicting or forecasting what our future would hold; especially in terms of international security and the corresponding policies. Whether in war fighting or budgeting, as one gets into the “out” years, uncertainties multiply exponentially making empirical quantification difficult and reinforces the requirement to produce a range of *possibilities* rather than a range of *probabilities*.<sup>3</sup>

And so, why is the Asia-Pacific region such an important security objective for the U.S. in the future? First we recall, of America’s most recent wars, the Asia-Pacific has produced our greatest maritime (Navy and Marine Corps) personnel tolls; over 52,000 Killed in Action (KIA) during World War II fighting the Japanese; over 4,700 KIA fighting the North Korean and Chinese Communists during the Korean Conflict; and over 14,000 KIA during the Vietnam Conflict fighting the North Vietnamese. Combined casualties from these actions in the Asia-Pacific amounted to over 70,000 Sailors and Marines killed and another 187,000 wounded in action.<sup>4</sup> Did these conflicts come about from America’s mismanagement or miscalculation within the region, or by chance? Could greater U.S. presence within the region have prevented these conflicts? Did the rapid and drastic draw down of U.S. forces after World War II create an environment where exploitative actors viewed an opportunity to expand their interests? These are but a few of many questions that historians and counter-factualists may argue well into the future.

But our focus here is not on the past, rather to examine where we are today and where we portend to be two decades from now in terms of the potential security environment and determining the role of maritime forces in supporting national security objectives within the Asia-Pacific region. My premise is simple: the United States will have two principle areas of vital interest over the next two decades; Southwest Asia and Northeast Asia. Additionally, I would submit that the U.S. defense budget is not going to rise, and if so, not appreciably nor to levels

that were enjoyed during the 1980's buildup as a percent of the overall U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Simply stated, today's military might is roughly one-half of its force structure during the time of the Gulf War in 1990 with the share of GDP for defense spending being cut from almost 6 percent to barely 3 percent today. Further, there appears to be less and less support for the idea of two major theater wars or major theater conflicts (MTW/MTC) as a measuring stick of how much military America needs. Arguably, this may or may not have been a genuine war fighting measuring stick and some have now claimed that it was more of a structure and procurement measuring stick than one based upon any real or perceived threat. I do not pretend to have the expertise to provide greater clarity to that debate, but I suggest that it is entirely reasonable for conflict to erupt, near simultaneously, in more than one location containing vital U.S. interests. Whether or not these conflicts qualify to be categorized as a major theater war will certainly be in the eyes of the beholder. And if those conflicts occur within one of the two regions (Southwest Asia or Northeast Asia), the tension placed upon the U.S. military to "fight and win"<sup>5</sup> would be critically strained, if not conventionally overwhelmed. This is not an argument for retaining the two major theater war scenario for defense planning. It is however, an assertion that the security agreements and relationships that we establish in the Asia-Pacific will allow us to economize our forces there to prosecute a major conflict elsewhere while minimizing the destabilizing effects of U.S. military absence. In short, conflict in the Asia-Pacific would leave the U.S. vulnerable in Southwest Asia, but with adequate partnerships and alliances in the Asia-Pacific the opposite is less likely to occur.

How then, does the U.S. prepare for, prevent or deter this type of scenario from happening given increasingly constrained U.S. military defense budgets, increasingly lower levels of support for U.S. military involvement by both U.S. and international citizens, increasingly technological sophistication of opponents, and increasing ambitions on the part of state-like actors and nation states to become hegemonic superpowers? It is useful here to define superpower and a great power. A superpower is one that is able to project its power globally. A great power is able to project its forces only regionally, but in a decisive manner and in the absence of intervention by a superpower or coalition of great powers. While a great power might lack immediate military capabilities, it has a massive economic engine that could allow it to become a superpower should it so decide.<sup>6</sup>

## **THE REGION DEFINED AND THE PRINCIPAL ACTORS**

For purposes of this paper, the Asia-Pacific region is defined in the same geographic terms the Department of Defense recognizes in terms of the area of responsibility (AOR)

assigned to the geographic Commander-in-Chief of United States Pacific Command (USCINCPAC). This distinction is relevant as the geographic Commander-in-Chief (CINC) is responsible for the day-to-day military involvement and war fighting responsibility within the region. Increasingly, since the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reform Act of 1986, the geographic CINCs find themselves implementing all instruments of national power on a day-to-day basis throughout their assigned geographic region of the world, not just military.<sup>7</sup> This increased level of political, economic and diplomatic work is both welcomed and damned, depending upon the audience and the situation.<sup>8</sup>

The Asia-Pacific region, thus defined, covers an area that is greater than one-half of the earth's surface and encompasses about 110 million square miles. The region covers from the west coast of the United States mainland to the east coast of Africa; from the Arctic to Antarctic; includes the states of Alaska and Hawaii and traverses 16 time zones. There are 43 countries, along with 20 territories and possessions and 10 U.S. territories that make up the Asia-Pacific region. These countries and entities comprise nearly 60 percent of the world's population and fully 35 percent of U.S. trade worldwide, amounting to more than \$548 billion in 1998. For means of comparison, U.S. trade with the European Union in 1998 amounted to 19 percent, 20 percent with Canada and 18 percent with Latin America. In the aggregate, nations of the Asia-Pacific region account for 34 percent of the Gross World Product (GWP) compared to the United States, which produces 21 percent of the GWP.<sup>9</sup>

The principal players in East Asia have been described as the *Strategic Quadrangle*; the United States, Japan, China and Russia. Three of the four are geographically linked to the region and the U.S. is included based upon the resources it has positioned there and its long-term engagement and commitment to the region.<sup>10</sup> The greatest tensions within the region today are in the Northeast where China continues to claim and desires to exert sovereignty over independence-minded Taiwan and its sharply increased military spending indicates expansionist ideas within the region. Additionally, North Korea ever so slowly makes conciliatory overtures toward South Korea seemingly in an effort to exact the greatest amount of compensation for their effort and to alleviate internal pressure upon the government by an increasingly disgruntled population. Japan completes the critical Northeast triangle. This critical strategic triangle is the linchpin in the regional balance of power in the Asia-Pacific with the United States as the honest broker<sup>11</sup> with the greatest overall leverage to influence the relationships of the others.

Japan has an overarching importance in the region that is twofold. First, it is by far the largest economy in Asia. At present exchange rates the Japanese economy is four times the

size of China's and accounts for nearly two-thirds of the entire Asian economy. Second, it is the economic pacesetter and serves as a role model for the region. That said Japan was not a very good role model in terms of nurturing a profit-driven market economy during the economic downturns of the 1990's.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, an aging populace who lived through World War II, is being replaced by a younger, more independence-minded and demanding population that yearns to be untethered from U.S. security agreements and permitted to make its own way in the region and global economy. This group is also seriously suspect of their leaders who have allowed the once thriving Japanese economy to slow to a crawl.

In the Southeast, continued simmering relations between India and Pakistan regarding Kashmir, and the one-upmanship nuclear rhetoric causes grave concern over relations between India and Pakistan and the threat of spillover or expansion within the region. The 1999 military coup in Pakistan and ongoing border disputes continues to fan the flames of conflict between these two nuclear-armed neighbors.

Although Northeast and Southeast Asia contain two of the major stakeholders in the region, there are numerous smaller entities whose actions may have a destabilizing effect upon the entire region. In Indonesia, the fourth most populous country in the world and the largest population of Muslims, there are continued tensions and pressures upon the tenuous government of President Megawati Sukarnoputri. President Megawati's fragile tenure is threatened by political turmoil, a prolonged economic crisis, a serious upswing in internal violence, and renewed attacks from international organizations to bring justice to those involved in human rights abuses during the East Timor independence referendum. Once a critical 'domino' in the cold war Asian security arena, Indonesia has new significance in the post-cold war world as a model for other countries in the process of rapid political and social change. As a Muslim-majority country, Indonesia's democratic experiment offers lessons for other societies with significant Muslim populations that are emerging from authoritarian rule. Strategically, Indonesia attracts the attention of China, Japan and the United States as it controls major shipping lanes in the region that are critical to U.S. security and economic interests and whose disruption would adversely affect both regional and global economies.<sup>13</sup>

In the Philippines, Muslim guerrillas continue to kidnap and ransom anyone from local villagers to international relief workers thus undermining a government ill equipped to deal with issues of legitimacy. Renewed calls for the ousting of President Joseph Estrada on corruption charges further exacerbated the government's problems in dealing with the rebels and instilling confidence in both Philippine citizens and world investors. Estrada's subsequent impeachment and removal, and replacement by President Gloria Arroyo has returned some degree of

confidence to the government, but frequent military clashes with Muslim separatist rebels continues to drain government funds and energy.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has had little impact on the region beyond efforts to garner relationships with neighboring China and to a lesser extent establish ties in South Asia with India. Additionally, Russia has provided at least tacit support to the North Korea regime and “shopped around” military arms and technology in an attempt to bolster its ailing economy. Today, China is Russia’s greatest trading partner and Russian President Putin is “making the rounds” in the Asia-Pacific with visits to Japan, India, and Vietnam in hopes of building long-term alliances and further open markets for military wares. But with a Navy that has been allowed to rust in port and internal conflict draining the military coffers, Russia is years away from reasserting herself as a viable military or economic force in the region.

### **U.S. POLICY AND INTERESTS**

The United States is often maligned for sending mixed political signals throughout the world, not excluding the Asia-Pacific. Perhaps one of the greatest challenges within a democratic form of government is the maintenance of a long-term, coherent foreign policy, given the U.S. penchant for changing presidential administrations every four years. This is especially true in the Asian culture where even two consecutive terms for a U.S. President is considered an extremely minute point in time. Some may assert the most coherent policy toward the Asia-Pacific has been one of ignorance and mistrust based upon the United States’ largely European lineage. The U.S. is fairly perceived as having an inherent tendency toward unilateralism in foreign policy that assumes one-size fits all throughout the world.<sup>14</sup>

The current U.S. National Security Strategy is namely a strategy of engagement, recognizing that the United States exists as the only remaining superpower and should embrace its role as a world leader in order to enhance our national security objectives; enhancing American security; bolstering our economic prosperity; and promoting democracy and human rights abroad.<sup>15</sup> This strategy is intended to utilize in consonance all forms of national power: diplomatic, information, military, and economic in order to *shape* the international environment, *respond* to threats and crisis, and *prepare* for an uncertain future.<sup>16</sup> The Clinton administration view of a new Pacific community linked security interests with economic growth and U.S. commitment to democracy and human rights.<sup>17</sup>

As outlined in the National Security Strategy, today’s focus in the Asia-Pacific is principally in Northeast Asia, specifically the Korean Peninsula. Of brief note here, not due to lack of import, but the U.S. conversely continues to utilize a long standing “rogue nation” adversary

policy toward nations that the U.S. doesn't recognize as embracing U.S. ideals of democracy, economic freedom, and human rights objectives. Iran, Iraq, Libya, Cuba, and North Korea are the principal long-term receivers of diplomatic "banishment" as adversarial states. This type of treatment is in direct contrast to the ideals embodied by a policy of engagement.

## **U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE TODAY**

Military responsibility for this region falls upon the Commander-in-Chief, United States Pacific Command (USCINCPAC). Pacific Command is composed of over 300,000 military personnel, 190 surface ships, 40 submarines and 1900 aircraft of which approximately one-third, or 100,000 personnel and respective equipment are forward deployed within the Asia-Pacific providing a "24 x 7" U.S. military presence throughout the region. This region contains the world's six largest armed forces: (1) Peoples Republic of China, (2) United States, (3) Russia, (4) India, (5) North Korea, (6) South Korea. Additionally, five of the seven worldwide U.S. mutual defense treaties are contained within the Asia-Pacific.

Approximately 53,000 personnel are located in Japan and Okinawa with another 35,000 deployed in South Korea. U.S. military forces have been continuously located in Japan and Okinawa since the occupation of that country during World War II. U.S. forces have been stationed in South Korea since the cessation of fighting during the Korean Conflict in 1953. The remaining 30,000 forward deployed forces are stationed in Hawaii and at minor garrisons within the region, as well as those operating afloat throughout the Asia-Pacific.<sup>18</sup>

## **THE FORECAST**

The region's importance to the United States will grow between now and 2025, whether due to its successes and strengths, or to the problems it could generate from weakness and strife. Asia, and particularly Northeast Asia, is the region of the world most likely to witness a major war. It is the region in which significant territorial disputes among major powers exist, in which the use of military force would alter the regional balance, and in which an alteration of the regional balance would invariably affect the world as a whole.<sup>19</sup>

In his book "Power Competition in East Asia," Suisheng Zhao succinctly addresses what he terms a parallel power competition within East Asia; success has induced many East-Asian countries to reconsider non-military actions and act cooperatively, while on the other hand they maintain distrust and territorial disputes therefore increasing their military capabilities.<sup>20</sup> Increasingly, economic competition and cooperation among adversaries through organizations like the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) have primarily replaced territorial and border disputes. However, there are

continuing hot spots -- China, the Philippines, Vietnam and Japan continue to clash over ownership of the Spratly Islands; China and Japan over the Shenkaku Island group; and China and Taiwan over Taiwanese sovereignty continues the era of territorial dispute even during an era of increasing economic interdependence.<sup>21</sup>

There is the inherent, and well-earned, distrust between China, Korea and Japan. Throughout the region, the economic prosperity has permitted an arms race of sorts among the more powerful countries in the Asia-Pacific. Additionally, as the United States, Russia and even the European Union work diligently to provide a stabilizing influence in the region, their very presence may polarize the region against what is perceived to be unwelcome interlopers into Asian affairs. As a result of increased technological developments and the proliferation of "cheap" missiles and "scientists and engineers" for hire, either in person or via the Internet, numerous countries now have the ability to strike one another without leaving their territorial home. This "stand-off" may well be the "stability" that the Asia-Pacific region endures for the foreseeable future.

The greatest military power in the Asia-Pacific is the United States. But as Bracken asserts, "Asia stretches military forces...those forces spill out into spaces that once were solely utilized by the American military. ...increased interaction and friction are inevitable and unavoidable..."<sup>22</sup> The handling of this friction, without it becoming an outright adversarial relationship, is in the details.

## NORTHEAST ASIA

### CHINA

China must be viewed as the major actor in the Asia-Pacific region for the foreseeable future based primarily upon its overwhelming population, increasing utilization of sophisticated technology, unprecedented economic growth, continued authoritarian/dictator leadership, demonstrated expansionist inclinations, and historical ideals for a leadership role (read dominant power) in all of Asia. U.S. political overtures toward China during the latter half of the past decade, the de-linking of China's trade status from the human rights issue and the establishment of reciprocal state visits, further emboldened China to a degree that it poses potentially the greatest threat to not only U.S. interests in the region, but to the United States itself.<sup>23</sup> If China is to be viewed as an adversary or engaged as a potential ally will be at the crux of future relations with this powerful Asian country. In either case, American vital interests in Asia and those of our long-standing allies will determine the posture of the two most powerful Asia-Pacific nations, the United States and China.

Political posturing with China at the end of the twentieth century driven by U.S. business interests thirsting for market share in the world's most populated country under the guise of "engagement," has shaken the confidence of long-standing U.S. alliances in the region and further fueled China's view of their destiny as ruler of all of Asia. This increasingly technologically advanced country may well become a near-peer rival to the United States and will exert influence throughout Asia not necessarily with occupation, but through economic and military presence and intimidation. In the foreseeable future, China embraces the idea and the opportunity to return to an Asian Dynasty where she dominates all of Asia. China will make unprecedented overtures toward regionalization over the next two decades as it builds economic and cultural interdependence to support its long-term expansionist goals.

Through indisputable gains in global economic reach, global technological leverage and two decades of investing ever increasing amounts of money into the world's largest military, China may well reach its aim of becoming a world class, not just regional, military. Reduced tensions and alliances with Russia releases tremendous resources allowing China to focus South and West instead of North. South to attain dominance over the Asia-Pacific and West to feed its ever-increasing demands for energy. China's Navy will be the most plentiful and powerful in the region. Slowly and methodically, China can draw a tightening noose around Taiwan until the recalcitrant island state succumbs to the mainland's pressure.

The United States must stand firm and enhance alliances with nations throughout the region, especially with economic and technological regional powers like Japan, South Korea (perhaps one Korea then), and in particular, continue to assist Taiwan in resisting overt and veiled Chinese aggression. The bottom line is a continued need for a balance of power within the Asia-Pacific to retain regional stability, and dominance by China directly counters this security objective.

## NORTH KOREA

North Korea continues under increased internal and external pressure, and without the wherewithal to maintain a stranglehold on their population, North Korea gradually and in measured steps, while maintaining the current totalitarian regime in power, moves painstakingly along the route to full reunification with the South. South Korea publicly abhors the slow progress, but covertly encourages it. With continued U.S. support South Korea hopes to discreetly slow the reunification process to prevent being overwhelmed by the onslaught of humanity flooding into the South to enjoy the fruits of South Korea's economic labors.

The wildcard in the future is the North Korean nuclear capability and an irrational decision making authority. If the North Korean government or military panics under a real or perceived loss of internal control and launches a military or nuclear strike, the entire region would be thrown into turmoil and potentially “all bets would be off” regarding treaties and alliances with the U.S. in the region. Japan would be a reluctant U.S. ally, having full appreciation for the devastation that nuclear weapons cause and also being acutely aware that they are well within range of North Korean weapons. No doubt a panicked attack on the South would bring a rapid U.S. response due to certain loss of U.S. uniformed personnel and U.S. citizens living in South Korea. Further, the rapidity of the attack coupled with the potential for thousands of North Korean Special Operations Forces (SOF) personnel infiltrating and “coming out” throughout South Korea and unhinges the last resemblance of order. North Korean SOF striking critical civil infrastructure and military targets would create mayhem and geometrically increase the mass confusion and disorderly flow of refugees fleeing the fighting. The flood of refugees moving south would clog vital lines of communications (LOC) needed to move reinforcements north to stem the tide and further exacerbate U.S. reinforcement efforts.

North Korean long-range artillery and infantry corps poised along the border, and the potential introduction of nuclear weapons would lay waste to Seoul within hours. As both the capital city and the spiritual soul of the South Korean people, the utter annihilation of Seoul would have a profound and lasting impact on the ability of the South Korean government to remain in control and wage effective resistance under this scenario. Prior to U.S. reinforcement and the potential hesitation by the U.S. to follow with a nuclear solution on the peninsula, North Korea would sue for peace under the guise of a unified Korea with the support of China and Russia as reluctant allies to discourage U.S. use of nuclear weapons. Other nations within the region would be silent allies with North Korea for fear of reprisal from both Korea and the increasingly powerful and nationalistic China.

## JAPAN

Japan was instrumental in making the Pacific Basin a peaceful trading area, working in concert with the United States.<sup>24</sup> Japan, at the turn of the century, showed little stomach or ambition for increased emphasis on defense spending or defense related matters remaining content beneath the U.S. security umbrella. Throughout the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Japan worked diligently at becoming an economic regional and global power. An increasingly younger and more “non-conformist” population desires for Japan to step out from underneath the real or perceived U.S. umbrella and develop to a regional power, both economically and militarily.

Expansion of the Japanese Self Defense Force and Maritime Self Defense Force to have an offensive capability within the region was quietly begun at the end of the last century and was fueled by continued economic prosperity brought about by sustained Japanese superiority in technology, especially robotics and artificial intelligence. No longer content to remain economically powerful while their military is regionally irrelevant, Japanese development and possession of long-range missiles and nuclear warheads is deemed in the countries self-defense as leverage against others in the region. Japan has increased their military reach regionally with near global capability through the addition of aerial refuelers and Navy oilers for replenishment at sea. Continued U.S. military presence in Japan, although at numbers less than half of what was stationed on Japanese soil in the 1980, demonstrates the United States' resolve in maintaining a lasting relationship with Japan and other governments within the Asia-Pacific region. The remaining force is largely symbolic and is comprised of very few actual combat troops who suffer from a scarcity of realistic training opportunities.

## **SOUTH ASIA**

### **INDIA**

India has prospered economically as the world's largest democracy by increasing technological capital and maintaining strong ties with the United States. This sustained prosperity however has resulted in increased tensions with neighbor Pakistan. India continues its tenuous relationship with Pakistan and its burgeoning population to the West. India maintains the upper hand in conventional military forces regarding expertise and quality, in both land and Naval forces. This is due principally to India's economic prosperity. Pakistan offsets this advantage by its nuclear weapon posture. This confrontational stance demonstrates that a careless undisciplined act could potentially lead to a devastating exchange.

India maintains a wary eye to the North toward China. However, the sheer logistics necessary for China to support any type of sustained incursion into India coupled with the extreme geography in which the battle would be waged and India's nuclear-arms capability gives credible protection to India's northern border. This topographical blessing allows for measured relations and economic trade with China without significant jeopardy to diplomatic, economic, or military relations with the United States. Increased U.S. Naval presence is predominantly due to U.S. military buildups in Guam, naval transits to and from the Persian Gulf, and the predominance of U.S. maritime expeditionary forces afloat due to reductions in land-based, forward deployed personnel in the Asia-Pacific.

## PAKISTAN

Pakistan, once America's hope for the region, continues to suffer under the burden of an unprecedented population growth due in part from spillover from Afghanistan and the ultra-fundamentalist Islamic rule of the Taliban who were in power until the recent war on terrorism. The country is racked by corruption, awash in arms, battered by feudal rivalries, and experiencing a population growth of about 3% a year. Instead of concentrating on the basics, Pakistan places heavy reliance on its nuclear weapons to "even the field" in military capability with India to the east. The ongoing dispute over Kashmir with India causes near continuous border skirmishes between Pakistani and Indian troops and has the potential to escalate. The nuclear arms capability of both India and Pakistan serves as a tenuous deterrent for both countries to prevent escalation, but it is of little consolation to either party or their regional neighbors as the risk of war remains high.

## FUTURE U.S. SECURITY OBJECTIVES

It is useful to begin by recalling our definitions of a superpower and of a great power. A superpower is one that is able to project its power globally. A great power is able to project its forces only regionally, but in a decisive manner and in the absence of intervention by a superpower or coalition of great powers. While a great power might lack immediate military capabilities, it has a massive economic engine that could allow it to become a superpower should it so decide. Under this definition, Russia and China are great powers, as are Europe and Japan. And India must be included in this list.<sup>25</sup>

The hands of the technological clock neither stand still nor go backwards. Technology arguably has been the major catalyst in driving the Asia-Pacific region, into an unprecedented era of inter-global dependence. Economic strife anywhere in the world has a near immediate impact on all other regional economies. Because of globalization, the U.S. can ill afford to refrain from being involved throughout the world. It is one of the inherent costs of being a dominant world leader with no global peer competitor. Certainly the U.S. may enjoy, or be subject to varying levels of influence relative to particular regions, but no other country enjoys the wherewithal to operate globally; unilaterally if necessary, to achieve vital national interests. How the United States handles this role as global leader is critical. This point is highlighted by General (Ret.) Daude Tonje, former Chief of Staff of the Kenyan Armed Forces, regarding the United States' role in Africa; "Africa doesn't need the United States to solve Africa's problems! Africa needs the United States to help Africa solve Africa's problems!"<sup>26</sup> General Tonje's assertion has equal applicability to the Asia-Pacific, as well. Not so much with the solution, but

with the offer to help countries reach and then implement a resolution. The United States must continue to embrace its role not so much as a “superpower,” but as a world leader. Not an apologetic leader, but certainly a humble, concerned leader who embraces the idea of providing leadership and reasonableness when disputes arise between neighbors and as an engaging partner, not the know-it-all big brother. Wu Xinbo writes in Contemporary Southeast Asia:

Another misperception is that, in the long run, China will endeavor to drive the United States out of East Asia. Again, this is an incorrect assumption. From Beijing’s perspective, the United States is an Asia-Pacific power, although not an Asian power, and its political, economic and security interests in the region are deep-rooted, as are its commitments to regional stability and prosperity. For China, U.S. involvement in the region is not a problem and, in fact Beijing has always welcomed a constructive U.S. role in regional affairs. At the same time, however, Beijing also feels uneasy at the way Washington has gone about its role in the region. As a superpower, the United States has been too dominant and too intrusive in managing regional affairs. It fails to pay due respect to the voices of other regional members, and sometimes becomes excessively involved in the internal affairs of others, lacking an understanding of, and sensitivity to, their culture, history, and values. There is no danger of the United States being driven out of East Asia, but the possibility does exist that one day it may be viewed as unwelcome by east Asian countries, and this could well lead to an undermining of the U.S. role in the region.<sup>27</sup>

No doubt that the United States and China view security issues in the Asia-Pacific through different lenses. Each country recognizes the other as the only peer competitor within the region and should respect each other’s relative security interests; agreed to or not. The United States must recognize its respective role and assume a conciliatory position acting bi-laterally, or multi-laterally, in a supporting mode solving problems within the region. This approach is implemented by focusing on security cooperation vice an approach of U.S. hegemonic stability. This requires a degree of tact and aplomb upon the part of U.S. representatives; political, diplomatic and military all acting in concert.

## **AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE**

Naval and Marine forces are the principal force and method of choice for helping to ensure regional stability within the Asia-Pacific due to the region’s expansive size and maritime orientation. U.S. military presence in the Asia-Pacific, whether forward based or forward deployed, plays a critical role in providing clear visible evidence of U.S. resolve in ensuring overall social and economic stability, and well-being within the region. In certain instances, the following assertions may be made regarding U.S. military presence:

U.S. military presence deters aggression

Deterred aggression promotes security

Increased security leads to regional stability

Regional stability leads to increased economic prosperity

Admittedly, it is difficult, if not impossible to impart precise metrics to evaluate the efficacy of the military presence assertion. Because regional stability is inherently inter-related and in the absence of forward deployed forces, the known presence of those forces elsewhere in the region, and the commitment to respond if needed provides nearly identical results. An example is the total U.S. military withdrawal from the Philippines in 1992. Although the U.S. military was not physically located in the Philippines, the country still enjoyed the benefit of the stabilizing effect of the forces located elsewhere in the region and the ongoing Mutual Defense Treaty.

Recall that the United States currently has approximately 100,000 military personnel and their corresponding hardware deployed in the Asia-Pacific. Is this the right number? Will this be the right number in 2020? What is the value of forward presence? What is the value of being forward deployed? Can the U.S. maintain a *virtual* military presence in the Asia-Pacific and still be considered a legitimate regional power? Where is the optimum location for forward basing in the Asia-Pacific? Are there additional options to forward basing? How do we measure the value-added of forward presence within the region? At what risk level is the U.S. willing to maintain forward deployed forces in the Asia-Pacific?

Beyond the security aspect, but intrinsically linked, is the protection of vital economic interests. Then Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Jay Johnson, speaking at the Naval War College's International Seapower Symposium, 8 November 1999 stated:

Today's world economy is a global market, with 90 percent of the world's trade traveling by the seas. Current predictions are that international shipping will continue to increase, with container tonnage doubling by 2010—despite the greater speed afforded by air and land transport.<sup>28</sup>

Closure or restriction of Southeast Asian Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOC) would have a measurable impact on the U.S. and world economy. The factor that converts a *localized* maritime concern (SLOC closure) to a *global* economic event (freight rate crisis *cum* capacity shortfall) is the large volume of shipping and world trade transiting the South China Sea. All trading nations have a vested interest in preserving stability in the Southeast Asian SLOCs.<sup>29</sup>

The East Asia Strategy Report (EASR), published in 1995 by the Department of Defense remains the definitive guidance for U.S. commitment to the Asia-Pacific region. The EASR identifies a continued forward presence in the Asia-Pacific, specifically the continued stationing of U.S. military forces in Korea and Japan—as the “bedrock of America’s security role in the Asia-Pacific region.”<sup>30</sup> Secretary of Defense William Cohen reiterated the United States’

commitment to a forward deployed national security posture during a lecture at The Ohio State University in October 2000 where he stated,

The U.S. has an obligation as the lone superpower to be forward deployed. We have to be out there, helping to shape the future decisions about world affairs. If we don't, someone else will be shaping them for us.<sup>31</sup>

Joint Vision 2020 is prepared to serve as a guideline for the U.S. military in preparing for an uncertain future, as delineated in the National Security Strategy. It reiterates that the primary purpose of the military is to fight and win wars. The constructs supporting this purpose are the strategic concepts of decisive force, power projection, overseas presence, and strategic agility.<sup>32</sup> Increased emphasis on greater levels of technology and the inherently exorbitant costs associated with research, development and fielding continues to put greater constraints on already tight defense dollars. Increasingly, there are demands for increased reductions in manpower and war fighting mechanisms in order to balance the books in the neighborhood of between 2 ½ and 3 percent of the U.S. GDP.

The future in Asia largely rests in the hands of the four major Asian powers, the United States, Japan, China and Russia.<sup>33</sup> In the case of the United States, we are the only superpower of the strategic quadrangle in East Asia and our decision to remain or disengage from the region is political vice geographical.<sup>34</sup> The United States is currently the only member of the four Asian powers with the resources, influence, and the national interests to shape the Asia-Pacific strategic environment. Regrettably, the end of the Cold War leaves little political leverage or public appetite for international leadership on the part of the United States, due to a lack of threats that pose a "clear and present danger" to the American way of life.

## **IMPACT ON MARITIME FORCES**

The linchpin of the U.S. engagement in the Asia-Pacific is the continued bi-lateral agreements with a number of our allies throughout the region. Certainly the most critical is the U.S.-Japan bi-lateral, but agreements with the Philippines, Thailand, South Korea, Australia, Singapore, and others are of vital importance to continued U.S. presence and influence. These agreements may be enhanced to include military assistance teams, mobile training teams, military-to-military exchanges, deployments for training, ship visits; a virtual plethora of opportunities for American military personnel to engage partner nation civilians and military personnel to demonstrate all that is good about U.S. intentions in the region. All of which foster an environment and a relationship whose equity may pay off grandly regarding access during crisis in the future. Additionally, agreements may be reached with less inviting countries like the Peoples Republic of China. Ship visits and mil-to-mil contact have proven time and again as

tremendous displays of good will and helps to thaw the political ice-bergs of doubt that surround overtures for new relationships. In the case of China, this is not taking a softer stand, but an effort at showing U.S. resolve in the Asia-Pacific first-hand, in a non-threatening way.

The obvious question remains; how much is enough? With the potential for reunification on the Korean Peninsula, there would appear to be no need for 37,000 military personnel to remain stationed on the peninsula after reunification. In a 1996 study titled, “Is 100K the Right Answer?” the Center for Naval Analysis lists two principal reasons as justification for having 100,000 personnel forward deployed; they play an important role in providing initial combat capability and enabling a rapid buildup of combat power in event of conflict in the region. As the study reflects, in theory, any number is the right number coinciding with an associated level of risk. Thus the more combat power the U.S. has forward deployed the less the risk, and the force also serve as a deterrent to aggression.<sup>35</sup> Absent from the study is discussion regarding force protection of U.S forces based on foreign soil or forward deployed at sea. This is a risk assessment that must be made and considered in the overall valuation of the deployment and the United States’ long-term commitment. Also, there is a disconnect in the strategic concept “decisive force” described in Joint Vision 2020 and the tenets of the National Security Strategy. As illustrated by Lieutenant David Adams in his prize-winning essay, “Win Without Fighting,” the term decisive force and its underpinned meanings drive military planners, as well as politicians and the public, in exactly the opposite direction that achieves the efficacy of engagement through forward presence.<sup>36</sup>

The physical presence of U.S. personnel in the Asia-Pacific is a resounding signal of America’s might and resolve to the region. No other country in the world has the military strength and economic ability to provide such a signal, but their physical presence is more than just “showing the flag.” Their presence is a real war fighting capability that is employed to serve as an able deterrent that any ambitious state, or non-state actor must consider whether or not to contend with the military might and political will of the United States.

The counter-argument to the deterrence theory is that military forces may in fact destabilize a region by causing escalation on the part of a potential adversary and that it presupposes that an adversary conducts a cost-benefit calculation prior to committing an aggressive act.<sup>37</sup> Deterrence was the cornerstone of U.S. strategy during the Cold War and its vestiges have spread their tentacles into all aspects of military planning. Although there is empirical evidence that conflict is most often waged from a position of real or perceived weakness on the part of the aggressor, U.S. policy continues to be influenced by the notion that a show of force will deter a potential adversary. While U.S. foreign policy formulation is typically

outside the realm of the military practitioner, it is he who bears the brunt of this miscalculation. Recall the earlier discussion regarding the role of the geographic CINCs in implementing the instruments of national power beyond just military. The military professional is at odds in this scenario because his best position is to have overwhelming advantage should conflict arise, but the very display of this capability may be the cause of the confrontation he is trying to avoid.<sup>38</sup>

There is risk associated with the question asked by the Center for Naval Analysis', "Is 100K the Right Answer?" The numbers themselves are irrelevant to the discussion. The assessed need is the relevant point. What are the mission requirements in the worst-case scenario? More likely still is, "what do you need to do the day-to-day missions?" The facts are, that you can do the day-to-day missions with wartime requirements, but are you willing to try and do wartime requirements with a day-to-day peacetime force level? Conversely, if it takes 15 CVBGs and ARGs and to maintain a global 1.0 peacetime presence, why can we get by with 12 in wartime?<sup>39</sup> This is an example of another problem found in JV 2020 where requirements are strictly tied to wartime needs and ignore peacetime presence requirements. Just how much amphibious shipping is required for 3.0 Marine brigades? The Naval Services must do a better job of explaining why it takes 3.0 to provide a 1.0 presence as a general rule of thumb. Much of this may seem trivial to the military reader, but to non-naval personnel and civilians, this is confusing math and must be better explained. What are the risks that we are willing to accept in combat capability, time, space, and lives?

These are precisely some of the same questions that must be asked in the micro sense for the Marine Corps in determining basing of forces currently in Japan and Okinawa. Yes, there are obvious training constraints with staying on Okinawa, but there is ample infrastructure in place to support both minimal training and wartime staging. This type of infrastructure is prohibitively expensive to replace elsewhere and the opportunity to deploy "off island" is always welcome, and enhances the expeditionary ethos and deployment training of the units. "Welcome" overtures from Guam and Australia certainly sound lucrative to many when compared to the near constant cacophony of complaints from the Okinawa Prefectures, but the critical question is, "does it meet our strategic requirements?" Japan and Okinawa are geographically ideal to respond anywhere within the theater in a matter of hours. The same is simply not true of other options like Guam, Australia, or Hawaii. If the Marine Corps is forced, and the Corps should not volunteer, to leave Okinawa, or reduce our numbers physically present there, it would be prudent to insist that the infrastructure be kept in place and maintained as a turn-key operation as an arrival and staging location during wartime. Staging of combat forces throughout the region may be an option, but trade-offs regarding unit cohesion

and war fighting degradation must be considered critically. Remember, Marines fight as a team and do it well because they live and train as a team, regardless of location. This simple truism cannot afford to be minimized nor lost in the debate.

Political ramifications of withdrawing Marine forces from the region may be offset by the idea of retaining them within the region, but located in other locations. However, withdrawal from the theater may be perceived as a lessening of U.S. resolve in the region, by both allies and competitors. This point may be lessened through education and communication of "capability vs. volume." Multiple options for withdrawal or relocation need to be examined, and it is prudent to investigate fallback positions.

A note of caution regarding option exploration is in order. The principal and most effective way to institute change within an organization is to change the "conversation" within the organization.<sup>40</sup> Introduction and continual discussion of change, something our Corps is generally adept at, becomes the critical catalyst in actually affecting that change. Therefore, caution should be exercised in the examination of the various options, or the reduction and/or departure from Okinawa will become a self-fulfilling prophecy with the ensuing degradation of Marine Corps expeditionary capabilities and U.S. national interests in the Asia-Pacific. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Shelton reported to the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress in February 2000 on the posture of the Armed Forces:

If the United States were to withdraw from international commitments, forsake its leadership responsibilities, or relinquish military superiority, the world would surely become more dangerous and the threats to American citizens and interests would increase.<sup>41</sup>

## THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

Unlike Europe, where U.S. military strategy depends on a multilateral defense structure (NATO), strategy in the Pacific depends on bilateral agreements. This and the many threats in the Asia-Pacific region are why the U.S. has relied on forward presence to maintain stability. However, with the fall of the Soviet Union, the U.S. has not shifted its focus from Europe long enough to imagine the potential future loss of military presence in the Asia-Pacific region.

The World that the United States Naval Service lives in is changing at an unprecedented rate as the sea services strive to navigate through increasingly turbulent and uncharted waters. The tool for this navigation must be unencumbered with parochialism and service bias while guided by the best interest of our nation's security. There is ample evidence available that one of the hallmarks of maritime service requirements, deterrence through presence, may be of limited utility.

Deterrence conceives of aggression as opportunity-driven. Challenges occur when defenders lack the military capability or political will to defend their commitments. Deterrence further assumes that adversaries assess the risks and likely consequences of their challenge before proceeding. Leaders who put their faith in deterrence are likely to rely on the military balance as a good predictor of challenges; they will expect their adversary to behave cautiously when the military balance is unfavorable. They are also likely to be insensitive to challenges driven by need and to the possibility of serious miscalculations by their adversary.<sup>42</sup>

The sea services would do well to closely examine the "why" of our military presence in the Pacific and ensure that we are visionary enough to look at our past to determine our future needs for a strong naval presence. It is without question that the vast area of the Pacific region requires a U.S. presence to ensure stability. However, instead of assuming we always will have bases in Japan and the Republic of Korea, U.S. officials need to assess the actions and resources needed to maintain assess to this vitally important region and begin contingency preparations.

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<sup>3</sup> United States Commission on National Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, New World Coming: American Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Commission on National Security, 1999), 3.

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